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Monday, 17 February, 2003, 13:01 GMT

## Millions join global anti-war protests



San Francisco wound up two days of demonstrations

A weekend of worldwide anti-war demonstrations has brought millions of people out onto the streets in support of a peaceful solution to the crisis between Iraq and the United States.

Most protests were on Saturday, but up to 250,000 people took part in a final event in San Francisco on Sunday, after making way for a popular Chinese New Year parade the day before.

Between six and 10 million people are thought to have marched in up to 60 countries over the weekend - the largest demonstrations of their kind since the Vietnam War.

Some of the largest turnouts were seen in countries whose governments have offered the staunchest support for US President George W Bush's tough stance against Iraq, threatening military action to force it to comply with UN disarmament rules.

“It was a wonderful feeling to be with over 150,000 people all opposed to our government's stance on the war”

Ann de Hugard,  
Melbourne, Australia

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The demonstration in London was the biggest in the UK capital's political history, with nearly two million taking part, organisers said, although police put the figure at 750,000.

Addressing a massive crowd in Hyde Park, London mayor Ken Livingstone said: "This war is solely about oil. George Bush has never

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The BBC's Emma Simpson reports

"Appropriately the protest is around the corner from the UN"

The BBC's Richard Galpin in Athens

"There are people here from all walks of life"



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given a damn about human rights."

In Barcelona, Spanish police estimated that up to 1.3 million people marched, with around 200,000 in Seville and more than 600,000 in Madrid.

Rome also claimed one of the biggest protests.

Organisers said three million were on the streets, while police estimated that 650,000 took part in the final rally, not counting those protesters unable to reach the rally venue.



Protesters marched in the capital of Syria

In Australia, more than half a million protesters jammed the streets of the six state capitals, with more than 200,000 protesters taking part in one of the biggest popular protests ever seen in Sydney.

However, Prime Minister John Howard - the only leader apart from the UK's Tony Blair to have sent troops to the Gulf - said he would not be swayed by the size of the demonstrations.

"In the end, my charge as prime minister is to take whatever decision I think is in the best interests of the country," Mr Howard said in a television interview.

### US opposition

The focus of a national day of action in the US was New York, which witnessed one of the largest displays of American public opposition so far to an attack by their forces against Iraq.

Hollywood stars Susan Sarandon and Danny Glover were among speakers addressing a 100,000-strong rally near UN headquarters - that included relatives of victims of the 11 September terror attacks.



Tokyo: Some protesters dressed up for the occasion

Ms Sarandon accused the Bush administration of "hijacking" national fears engendered by 11 September, saying: "There are alternatives to war. Nothing has

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been proved so far that warrants an invasion of Iraq."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu said that those who wished to wage war on Iraq "must know it would be an immoral war".

Mr Glover was also in San Francisco for Sunday's march, joining the writer Alice Walker and singers Bonnie Raitt and Joan Baez in a crowd that stretched along from the waterfront to the ornate City Hall.

There were about 40 arrests after a small group of demonstrators broke off from the demonstration and smashed windows and pelted police officers with stones in the upmarket Union Square district.

On Saturday, police fired tear gas at demonstrators at a rally in Colorado Springs, hitting at least one person with a rubber bullet after their protest spilled out of a park and blocked a major thoroughfare.

### **Around the world**

Protests elsewhere were more muted.

More than 10,000 protested in India's eastern city of Calcutta while several thousand gathered in a Tokyo park.

But reports from Asia's Muslim nations were of much lower numbers, with 3,000 in Islamabad, just 300 in Karachi and a thousand in Dhaka.

Five hundred people turned out in Jakarta, although a much larger protest was seen last weekend with about 7,000 on the streets.

The Arab world's largest demonstrations took place in Baghdad itself, and the Syrian capital Damascus.

Reports from the Tunisian city of Sfax say police stormed into a crowd of about 3,000 people and beat them with batons and truncheons, injuring at least 20.

The Tunisian authorities have banned past rallies in support of Iraq for "security reasons", causing angry protests by the organisers.

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